The Seed Sower.

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The Burn among the Heather.

Nursed on the bosom of the Ben,
I track thee downwards to the glen,
With all thy devious twists and turns
Through moor and moss, mid bent and ferns;
And careless as the wilful wind,
What joys we seek and fail to find,
We'll pass the summer day together,
Thou bonnie burn among the heather.

An idle robin wandering by,
Thinks he may bathe as well as I,
But doubtful of the traitor, man,
Flies out of danger while he can;
A mountain lamb, that longs to drink,
Starts to espy me from the brink,
And scuds affrighted down the wind,
Scared at the sight of human kind.

It pains me, fellows of the dust;
To know your terror and mistrust,
And that you fail to understand
There lurks no murder in my hand;
That I'm unwilling to destroy
The humblest innocence and joy,
And that your dread of me and mine,
Jars upon harmonies divine.

I rise refreshed, to trace once more
Thy wanton waters to the shore,
And never weary as I go;
Blue sky above, green earth below;
To render into words the song,
Now soft and sweet, now loud and strong,
That to the sunlight and the moon,
Thou singest to such constant tune.

I know the old familiar strain!
I've sung it and will sing again,
The song of Gratitude and Love,
Such as the skylark trills above;
The lilt of Hope, and Joy, and Peace,
The Hymn of Praise that shall not cease,
While Love and Reason dwell together,
Thou bonnie burn among the heather!

Death and Judgment.

A LECTURE GIVEN IN THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH BY REV. L. P. JACKS, M.A.

Ought we to regard death as a defect in Nature, and a blot upon the order of the universe?

Protestant theology has, undoubtedly, encouraged men to regard it as such. Death appears in popular theological teaching as something which ought not to be, and which, under happier circumstances, would not be. The author of this view is St. Paul. His conception of the subject is summed up in the well-known words, "The wages of sin is death." There can be little doubt that these words do not refer to the moral death of the soul, but to the physical death of the body. In that sense Dr. Denny, one of the most recent orthodox writers, interprets them. St. Paul would have us think that in the fair plan of the world, as drawn by God, death had no place. But man sinned, death entered, and the fair plan of the world was spoiled.

We find a more recent expression of the same thought in Milton. Readers of "Paradise Lost" will remember the powerful passage in the second book, where Satan, on his journey from the infernal regions to the earth, encounters the two terrible forms of Sin and Death. Both these principles are personified by Milton, and it is a question which of the two he paints as the more hideous and foul. Sin is represented as a malignant witch. Death is a huge amorphous mass of ugliness.

"The other shape,
If shape it might be called that shape had none,
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
* * * * black as night it stood,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart: what seemed his head
The likeness of a kingly crown had on."

Such is Milton's conception of Death. Evidently what lurks behind this representation is the notion that death, like sin, is a frightful evil, such as a good God would not allow to exist, except as a punishment for the guilt of mankind.

Now, in the light of our present knowledge of nature, can we sustain the view of Paul, Milton, and of Protestant Theology generally? I think not. Of course if we look at the matter from the personal and selfish point of view we shall conclude that Milton, and those for whom Milton speaks, do not exaggerate the evil there is in death. Death is probably the largest single source of human sorrow. But if we lay personal consideration aside and look at the matter scientifically, in the light of what we know concerning the other arrangements of the universe, we shall find that death is a necessary member of those arrangements.

First, physical death is the only condition on which physical life, as we know it, is possible. Death is the secret of the everlasting youth of the human race. Had there been no death for the last five thousand years, and if the rate of increase had been steadily maintained, there would be enough human beings in the world to fill up the seas and to pile the surface of the earth to the level of the mountain tops. Moreover the doctrine of evolution makes it clear that the development of new and better types can only be effected by the removal of the old and obsolete. The evolutionist cannot doubt that if there is to be progress in the world, whether physical or moral, death must do its work. It is not a curse upon life, but as necessary in the order of the world as life itself. Therefore, standing on the ground of science, it is impossible for us to call down imprecations on this part of the natural order. However painful it may be to face and to bear, we cannot say that an arrangement so necessary for the good of the whole was never intended in God's plan of the world, and has only appeared through the sin of man.

At the same time I am very far from supposing that this scientific argument will make any of us one whit the less reluctant to die. No healthy soul can ever fall in love with death. It will always cling to life. Argue as you will about natural necessities there must always be a shrinking of the whole man from taking the step into the Great Unknown. This is no sign of weakness. It comes to great souls as well as little ones. Sometimes indeed this natural shrinking is mixed up with other elements of fear for which we have no excuse. The doctrine of a vindictive and punishing God has been so long before the world that brave and sensible people are sometimes troubled by its influence, in spite of their better knowledge. I have known a man who had long freed himself from the degrading terrors of eternal torment, and yet this abominable doctrine had been so instilled into his mind during the susceptible period of childhood, that even in his wiser maturity he was conscious of some dregs of the old fear not yet quite shaken out of his soul. But apart from these foreign and unnatural causes of fear, there is in all men a natural and perhaps a noble dread of death. It is on record that the best soul God ever made found the cup exceedingly bitter. It was preceded by the agony and the bloody sweat and by the prayer that the cup might pass away. He felt, as all of us must one day feel, that death is the most formidable adversary to human hopes and joys.

This universal feeling in regard to death has played a great part in the origin of religion. In all ages and in all races there exists and always must exist a feeling that this present life cannot satisfy. However good it may be, however full of riches, honour and love, yet the brevity of its duration fills men with regret and longing. Given life at its best, there isn't enough of it to content us. Everywhere and always the mind of man is confronted by the certainty that the highest good he can win on this earth must soon be taken away from him. And just because death baulks the desire to find the ultimate satisfaction here, the mind of man has gone in search of that satisfaction elsewhere—I mean among truths that eye hath not seen nor ear heard. Hence the discovery of the spiritual world. Death is a hard tyrant, but, like many literal tyrants, indirectly he has been the means of bringing a great blessing to man-

kind. Let me quote a parallel. In the reign of Charles I. the tyranny of the king and his Ministers made England intolerable to the Puritans. The best blood of the nation was driven out to seek a home beyond reach of the king's tyranny. Fleeing over sea they landed in America, and there these outcasts became the seed of the mighty American race. To the tyranny of Charles I. we owe the foundation of the New World. Now, my point is that death has played the part of a Charles I. in the realm of religion. Death has brought it home to man that the world of sense affords no scope for his free spirit to develope and has driven his best thoughts in quest of that new and larger world of things unseen and eternal. I am well aware that a person unfriendly to religion might give this illustration an unfavourable twist. "Yes," he would say, "Death has made this earth intolerable and has driven men to *invent* the so-called truths of religion as consolation for the misery of their actual lot." But whether the truths of religion are invented or whether they are real discoveries cannot be pre-judged in this way. The Puritans driven out by Charles I. did not invent the America where they found refuge. And it may well be that this notion of a good which is not of this earth, is not an invention either. We must ask, do these truths *work?* Do they lend themselves to the enlargement of man's life? We must appeal to experience, and if experience gives a favourable answer we shall have every reason to believe that these truths are real discoveries and not inventions. But my business to-night is not to discuss the truths of religion. My question is, whence does religion arise? And I answer, Death, which has shown man the ultimate futility of the life of the senses, and compelled him to seek the religion of a higher life. Owing to death man has always felt the need of a religion, and always will.

I believe that many persons would meet this statement in a spirit of decided objection. They would say, "This is not the true origin of religion. It is misery and ignorance and wrong which has caused men to invent the doctrine of spiritual things. Because the mass of men are miserable in this world they console themselves with imagining a world where they will be better off. Because they are ignorant, they picture a higher state of being in which they will become miraculously wise. Because their present governments are so largely based on wrong, and because society is full of unrighteousness, they think there must be some more powerful governor, who will ultimately punish the guilty and make all things right. In fact all the doctrines of religion are the outcome merely of the wretchedness and the wickedness of this present world. Do away with that wretchedness, abolish that wickedness, and the need for religion will cease to exist. When the golden future has arrived, when there is no poverty and no crime, when all men are well off, well-educated, when society is honest and government just, then no more will be heard about God and the future life, except as exploded fictions of the past."

All this, I venture to say, is one of the popular and cheap fallacies of our age. There are a dozen convincing reasons to prove it such. I shall deal with only one of those reasons to-night. It is simply this: the universal certainty of death will prevent religion from disappearing. To begin with, the growth of material happiness will not take away man's need for religion. No doubt as time goes on the average happiness of the race will increase; it has increased in the past, it is increasing now. But let this increase of happiness advance to what height it will, there is still that dark shadow at the end. When everybody is well off death will not be a lesser evil than it is now: I go so far as to say it will be a greater evil. Look at the people living around you and consider. What class is that which finds death the greatest evil? The poorest? The most miserable? The most hopeless? By no means. My experience is that the horror of death is far greater among the well-to-do than among the badly off. The more material happiness a man enjoys, the more reluctant he is to die. It is hard to have to part with the good things of life, but harder when the good things are many than when they are few. So the matter stands here and now. And is anyone so illogical as to think that when this earth shall have become a place of universal happiness, men in general will be more content to quit the scene than they are now. Obviously they will be less content. Death will compel them even more imperiously than it does now, to find their ultimate satisfaction in truths which

are above the truths of sense. I therefore draw the inference that the increase of material happiness in the world will not remove the demand for religion.

Now take the other proposition—that the need for religion will disappear as men grow in intellect and character. When the advance of the evolution of the race has raised the average man far above the intellectual and moral level at which he now stands, will the catastrophe of death seem any less to him than it does now? Put the case to yourself. Suppose you possessed the intellect of a Huxley, or the artistic soul of Turner, or the poetic genius of Shakespeare, or the practical ability of Bismarck, or the conscience of Aristides—should you view the extinction of your being with any pleasanter feelings than you do now? It is obvious that the greater one's power of thinking, willing, and loving, the harder trial is it for human selfishness to face the certainty that a time will come when those precious gifts will cease to be. And so, in the far distant future of evolution, when this earth is peopled by a nobler race, and when there will be a fairer human harvest for the sickle of death, will the certainty of his reaping be any less bitter for us to bear for ourselves—any less sorrowful to see enacted upon those we love? It is not only that the death of a hero is a greater evil than the death of a common man; but beyond this we have to consider that the higher a man stands in the scale of true manhood, the more deeply and keenly will be sorrow over the tragedy of the common lot. I therefore conclude that intellectual and moral progress, like material progress, will not destroy the potency of death as a factor of life. As the world advances, it will impel men even more strongly than in the past to seek their ultimate consolation in religion.

But another objection may be advanced against the view I have tried to express. It may be said "the proper way to deal with one certainty of our death is not to become religious, but to train one's mind to forget all about it."

A large element of truth exists in that objection. Just as there is a natural shrinking from death, so there is a natural forgetfulness of death. This natural forgetfulness ought to be encouraged and not discouraged. But that applies only to those of us who have to do the work of the world and want all our energy and thought for the duty that lies before us. It does not apply to those thinkers and teachers who lay down the doctrine of how men ought to live. In constructing a doctrine of life one must take account of *all* the facts. One must forget nothing. Least of all must we forget the one absolutely universal and most portentous feature of the whole case. No doctrine of life, no theory of how men ought to live, no gospel ancient or modern, no science of conduct, is worth the ink in which it is written unless it fairly and squarely envisages the fact *that men have to die* and gives that fact the weight that naturally belongs to it. Forgetfulness of death is no fault, but a virtue, in a work-a-day soul. But it is a fatal fault in anyone who professes to teach men how they should live and what they should love. At the present day there is a vast amount of teaching about life which pretends to be scientific. Now the first business of science is to take account of facts. This holds equally whether the science in question deals with stars or butterflies or with the still more important matter of "how to live." By all means let our thoughts on this great subject be as scientific as our thoughts on those other subjects. But when any one professes to instruct us scientifically on this subject let us put this test question: Does his teaching give proper weight to the certainty of death? Does it square with that certainty? Does it satisfy us when we keep that certainty full in view, or does it satisfy only so long as we thrust it out of sight? If the teaching does not answer this test it is not worth our while to spend an hour in its consideration. Let it boast the name of science as it will, it is not science, but one of the worthless aberrations of the human mind. In one day there is an enormous mass of literature both in books and in the newspaper press, written by exceedingly able hands, expressed in the language of science and exact thought, and professing to help men in solving the problem how to make the best of life. Nine-tenths of it will not stand the test. Its authors steadily refuse to take account of the big *fact*. So long as that fact is thrust aside, what these writers have to tell us seems plausible enough; bring the fact in, however, and the whole construction turns to wind and emptiness. Not one bit of it will live. Turn to the gospel of Christ. In certain regards science may afford

to smile at it. But in one respect it is infinitely more scientific than many a proud treatise which now boldly claims the name. *It takes account of the fact that men must die.* Throughout its entire estimate of life-values, it never forgets the brevity of the life for which they have value. Mr. Grant Allen certainly knows a great deal more of the physiology of the brain and nervous system than Jesus Christ did; but Jesus Christ shows his immense superiority as a man of science, counting the *facts*, when he says "Thou fool: this night thy soul shall be required of thee." The gospel may be viewed as a life doctrine for men who dare to remember that they must die. And not only Christ, but if you will make a list of the great men who have won a permanent place among the teachers of mankind —I do not mean the professed apostles of religion, but the poets of humanity—Homer, Dante, Shakespeaare, Milton, Shelley, Gœthe, Tennyson, you will find that in those parts of their utterances which appeal most deeply and enduringly to the universal heart of men, they have not forgotten the simple truth *that men must die.*

I have spoken of death as the cause which has prompted men to seek and find certain truths belonging to a higher life. These truths are comprised under two main heads.: the doctrine of God and the doctrine of Immortality. I do not propose to add anything to-night to what I have said in previous lectures by way of justifying either of these doctrines. Let me only point out to you how they make good that want in the human heart which the fact of death causes to exist. There have been many good and noble souls who have found all they needed in the doctrine of God alone. They have not asked for immortality. To believe in a righteous principle at the heart of things, which guarantees the ultimate triumph of the right, has fully satisfied the deepest yearning of their spirits. In every act of self-sacrificing love done upon the earth they have seen a revelation which unveiled the purpose of God in the world from its beginning to its consummation. And this has set their hearts at rest. In all humility, and in the deepest spirit of consecration they have looked upwards and said, "I ask for no blessing except that of being in harmony with Thy eternal order. To know that this is good and that I am its servant is enough. Whether I live or whether I die let it be unto Thee and as in Thy sight." Thus spoke the great heathen philosopher and emperor, Marcus Aurelius, "O, universe, everything harmonises with me which is harmonious to thee. Nothing for me is too early or too late which is in time for thee. O, Nature, everything is fruit to me which thy seasons bring. From thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee all things return."

But the belief in immortality has brought men the chief consolation for the brevity and incompleteness of this life. Incapable alike of proof and of disproof, this belief has its roots in Hope, but a hope which is stronger than demonstration. You hear it said frequently that even if there be a future life we can know nothing of its conditions. I cannot accept that statement. To begin with, if the intuitions of the greatest minds are to be trusted, and if it be true, that the whole constitution of the world rests ultimately on the law of Right and Justice, then we may rest assured that whatever life awaits us hereafter will rest upon that law equally with the life we live now. In other words, it will be a life that we have made for ourselves by the way we have behaved ourselves on this planet. It will be the natural, logical, just *continuation* of our present existence. By every thought, word, and act we build up and strengthen, we beautify or deface the personality that is to be our future self, and according to the quality of thoughts, words, and deeds now, will be the quality of that personality hereafter. I beg you to mark the words "continuation" of our present existence. Popular theology represents the future life in a different light. It gives us to understand that we enter another world not to continue on our natural line of development, but to be judged for what we have done in the flesh. The soul has no sooner quitted the body than it receives judgment on itself, and in imagination we see ourselves brought to the bar of Divine justice to hear the sentence of weal or woe, after which we are supposed to spend the whole of eternity in enjoying the one or suffering the other. Now I say with all respect that I cannot find the least justification, natural or moral, for such a view. A few years of living on this earth, followed by an eternity of reward or punishment for those few years is an irrational and purely imaginary state of things.

Friends, we do not enter another world to be rewarded or punished for the way we have lived in this, *but to continue an existence on the lines we have made for ourselves. Here*, all our life long, we are sowing a seed; *there* we shall inherit the harvest, good or evil, which has naturally and inevitably grown from that seed. This view is not only in keeping with our knowledge of the moral order of the world, but it leaves hope for everyone. If the future state be one of reward or punishment, what hope is there for the innumerable wrecks and failures of earth? The best they can hope for is a sentence of annihilation. But if we conceive of the future life as a *continuation*, then there is hope that even the poorest and most broken specimen of humanity may, when transplanted into a better soil and a sphere of happier influence, ultimately develope into the fulness of a living soul.

And now a very few words will suffice to explain the meaning of Judgment. What some intend by the Day of Judgment—the Judge on his throne, and the human race at the bar—a general assize of all souls—is a creature of the imagination. To be judged is simply *to come into possession of the natural fruits of one's life.* God's judgments proceed there as they do here, by intelligible moral laws. There is no such unintelligible breach of continuity as this sudden dooming of men to weal or woe implies. Whoso wants to understand the Day of Judgment has only to consider his own life here, and he will find that judgment, so far from being deferred to the next life, is an awful fact in every hour of this. Judgment is continuous and unremitting from the day we become responsible beings. It consists in the registration of the acts of the soul in the form of the soul. I mean that the effects of each moment of life are immediately built into the structure of our character; they at once become a part of oneself, and such our thoughts and deeds are, such must we become. A man becomes that which he is made by the way of his life. A good deed is hardly done before the man becomes a higher being; an evil deed is hardly thought of before the soul is stained and defaced. Here, surely, is judgment! Let no man think that he must *wait* for his sentence. Let him listen to his own heart, and he will hear the bell strike prompt and clear without a moment's interval.

There is no escaping from this, and brave and good men will not ask to escape. Many an ingenious theology has been devised for postponing the day of judgment to some distant date. Many a strenuous effort has been made by the human imagination to break that mighty chain which binds moral effects to moral causes, Men have pictured a future assize of the world. They have fabled of an atonement paid. Vain dreams! The link that binds the moral consequence to the moral cause is "strong with all the strength of God's universe," and he who seeks to break it is bound to come to nought.

To be gladly confident of this is to hold the deepest truth of religion. Let us not shrink from accepting the natural consequences of our lives, but let us bow our heads and bear them. They spring from that blessed Justice which is at the root of things, and in which rests our one hope for the ultimate triumph of the Good and the True.

Love and Hate.

[*To an amiable lady, who said it was wrong to hate.*]

Because of love man needs must hate,
For love and hate are close allied;
Though seeming widely separate,
Love is but hate's diviner side.
And none may either passion hate,
Whilst in the bosom they abide,
Unless the other is denied.
Hate thus hath a responsive weight,
Because of love.
If I esteem good things, perforce,
I must hate evil things no less;
As beauty loathes all ugliness.
Let me so hate, and then, of course,
Thy worth will more my mind impress,
Because of love.

JOHN COTTON.

Grace.

As the small dew-drop, in its little sphere
Of crystal—pure and clear—
Receives, inurns, and then reflects, when won,
The gleams of the great sun;
So may the humblest heart, too, as a shrine,
When set aright, obtain the LIGHT DIVINE;
And manifest through life, in every place,
Some tender aspect of its cheering grace.

JOHN COTTON.

Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture" considered as Parables.

INTRODUCTORY: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ART AND ETHICS.

It may be doubted whether Ruskin ever wrote a more suggestive book than his "Seven Lamps of Architecture." According to his designation, the key-words and guiding lights of all noble architecture are: Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, Obedience. I propose to take Ruskin's essays on these various lamps as parables of that other architecture—the building up of fine and noble character.

It may be asked: "But what has architecture to do with ethics, conduct, the things of faith, and the religious life? Are you going to talk to us about the various styles of Gothic buildings instead of the soul and its salvation? Where is the place of shafts and mouldings, pillars and traceries, cusps and finials, string courses, elevations, and arches in Christian meditation? The discussion of lines of doctrine may not be very profitable, but are you not turning the pulpit to trivial purposes by using it for discussing lines of beauty?"

Well, let the objector consider how often Jesus uses the word *like*. Everything about the kingdom of God is with Jesus *like*—like a sower, like a fisherman, like a merchant, like a housewife who has lost a silver coin, like a steward, like a vine, like a fig-tree, like children playing in the market-place. Then, why not like an architect, like a building, like a tower, like a traceried window, like a column, like the flower-work on the capitals, and so forth? All things are parables of all other things, and from the time Paul said: "Ye are temples of the Holy Ghost," men have used great and beautiful buildings as images and symbols of diviner realities.

Ruskin is, before all things, a great art critic, and yet he is almost as much a prophet. All his art teachings and criticisms are saturated with ethical ideas. He is nothing unless he is moral. "Do you look out," wrote George Eliot in her early days to her friend, Miss Sarah Hennell, "for Ruskin's books whenever they appear? I venerate him as one of the great teachers of the age. He teaches with the inspiration of a Hebrew Prophet." What George Eliot admired in Ruskin was his teaching of "Truth, Sincerity, Nobleness." Ruskin took the gospel of Truth, Sincerity, and Nobleness as he had learned it from Carlyle, and applied it to a sphere untouched by Carlyle—the sphere of art. He founded his gospel of art on great principles of life, and then he used art to illustrate these same principles, when applied to industrial and social problems. In many quarters art is thought of as a dilettante pursuit, a toy for the idle, a luxury for the rich, an indulgence for the sensuous. On the contrary, Ruskin has always treated art, not indeed as definitely moral or didactic, but as closely bound up with man's spiritual nature. He has everywhere insisted that it is the duty of the artist to choose noble subjects.

> The life is short, the craft so hard to learn; then for God's sake do not waste your hard-won skill and scanty time in painting an "impression" of a ballet-girl instead of a vision of angel choirs.

Art and religion are with Ruskin almost synonymous. For if by religion is meant the feelings of love, reverence, awe, with which the mind is affected by its conceptions of spiritual being, then art is a prime agent in their quickening. It has been pointed out by that fervent Ruskinian, Mr. Cook, that our author is at once Puritan and Painter—an Evangelical by training, a Catholic by taste, a Rationalist by experience. Hence he has resisted both the philistinism of evangelical religion, and the frivolity and false sentiment of popular art. To the "Æsthetes" in particular he has ever been a deadly enemy, and there is not a line in his book which does not give the lie to the principle, or a rebuke to the practise of that school. According to it the essence of art is beauty, and the essence of beauty consists in its appeal to the senses. This is the theory of the matter which is responsible for all that sensuality and frivolity in art, which made the Puritans banish it as the accursed thing, and which in modern days has made the word "Æstheticism" an offence!

Ruskin's theory of the function of art is diametrically opposite. According to him

> There is no other definition of the beautiful, nor of any subject and delight to the Æsthetic faculty, than that it is what one noble spirit has created, seen and felt by another of equal and similar nobility.

The pleasures which art offers are pleasures not

of the senses but of the mind. The world of beauty is like the Beryl in Rosetti's ballad—

None sees here but the pure alone.

The mission of art is spiritual. "We live by the sweat of our brow or the chink of our machinery, says the man of business." "We live not by bread and machinery alone, but by admiration, hope, and love," says the artist. Great art is the symbol of pure, noble, and beautiful life.

When George Eliot speaks of Ruskin's art criticisms as teaching "Truth, Sincerity, Nobleness," she emphasises a favourite doctrine of which Ruskin never wearies, namely, that the great principles of life and conduct apply all round, and that you cannot truly study any subject or become proficient in any craft without grounding yourself on those ethical truths which never know change. The statesman, the author, the manufacturer, the orator, the poet, the fisherman, the ploughman, the lawyer, the mother, all must follow the same ideals of Truth, Sincerity, Nobleness.

There is no branch of human work whose constant laws have not close analogy with those which govern every other mode of man's exertion. But more than this, as we reduce to greater simplicity and surety any one group of these practical laws, we shall find them passing the mere condition of connection and analogy and becoming the actual expression of some ultimate nerve or fibre of the mighty laws which govern the moral world. However mean or inconsiderable the act, there is something in the well-doing of it which has fellowship with the noblest forms of manly virtue; and the truth, decision, and temperance which we reverently regard as honourable conditions of spiritual being, have a representative influence over the works of the hands, the movements of the frame, and the action of the intellect.

Thus every action, down to the drawing of a line or the utterance of a syllable, is capable of dignity, both in the manner of it and the motive of it. There is no action so slight or so mean, but may be done to a great purpose, and ennobled therefore.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

God is not too great a being, as is often supposed, to be brought into our petty affairs. We treat God with irreverence by banishing Him from our thoughts, not by referring to His will on slight occasions. He is not the finite authority or intelligence which cannot be troubled with small things. There is nothing so small but that we may honour God by asking His guidance of it, or insult Him by taking it into our own keeping. Our insolence is in ever acting without reference to God.

Hence in dealing with art Ruskin takes the higher line of argument, and shows that not a cusp can be cut, not a finial carved, not a pillar rounded and polished, not a picture painted, without Truth, Sincerity, Nobleness.

So every bit of true architecture shows us that there are such things as sermons in stones. Even bad and false architecture shows it also, since, instead of truth, sincerity, nobleness, it is a minister of untruth, insincerity, baseness, at which the world may take warning. Every jerry-built house illustrates how mean and base is a lie. On the other hand, our Gothic cathedrals preach to us eternally of truth and beauty. They were built in ages when priests and builders and people were over-powered by their faith. Love and fear laid every stone. They have a strange power of kindling reverence, aspiration, humility, joy. When under their glorious arches the hearts of men

Lift themselves up higher,
And learn to love with zealous humble duty
The eternal fountains of that heavenly beauty.

Ruskin contends that the large principles of right and truth are applicable to every stage and style and department of art, and that the art which is created in accord with them, illustrates them in return, and brings them to mind and conscience as laws of conduct. Those principles—the lamps of Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, Obedience—without which noble architecture is impossible, are not only impressed by man on his buildings, but his buildings in turn impress them on man. So that a noble building, or any noble work of art, is a word of God's as truly as a prophetic utterance or a beatitude of Christ's, and in its place such a word is a lamp unto the feet.

To-day, then, it may be sufficient, as an introduction to the consideration in some detail of these lamps of architecture and life, to insist on the intimate and inseparable connection between a noble ethics and a noble art. It is a general impression that art has nothing to do with ethics, and a school of "Æstheticism" has risen into prominence, which proclaims on the house-tops

that art is for art's sake, and that morality is quite another story. It does not matter in their view what may be the subject depicted,—the most loathly, the most brutal, the most degrading, the most sensual aspects of life—provided the execution be fine. It declares that all subjects are lawful for the artist, and that animal passion is just as fit for artistic representation as angels a-praising God! Hence you have pictures which cannot be exhibited in public galleries, poems which no woman can read without a blush, novels which justify the licence of passion, problem plays which discuss questions of free love, and theories of life and conduct, of pleasure and artistic emotion, which culminate in all the unspeakable filth brought to light by a late notorious trial. Never was a greater lie promulgated than that art and morality have nothing to do with each other. The truth is, in so far as fine art is not moral, it loses its fineness and becomes base. The purpose of fine art is to exalt and perfect the ethical state by awakening the spiritual faculties of wonder, admiration, reverence, love. The moral purity and spiritual delight of the emotion aroused is an index of the fineness of the art. A work of art reveals the mind and character of the man who created it. It is not that he must only deal with Sunday school subjects. Æschylus, Shakespeare, and the great dramatists deal with incest, murder, adultery, and all the passions, fierce and gentle, quite freely, but the result is to fill the heart and mind of the spectator with awe, fear, pity, and reverence. These great souls are not "procurers to hell," and their works are full of ethical and spiritual grandeur. For the men themselves were of noble heart—not without faults, many and grievous, but in the main true to divine ideals. Here is a prophetic passage from Ruskin:—

> All good has its origin in good, never in evil; the fact of either literature or painting being truly fine of their kind, whatever their mistaken aims or partial error, is proof of their noble origin; if there is indeed sterling value in the thing done, it has come of a sterling worth in the soul that did it, however alloyed or defiled by conditions of sin.

People seek to justify themselves by quoting Burns, Byron, Shelley as men who transgressed the moral law, and were yet artists. Yes, but their moral trangression was not the secret of their artistic power; that arose from what was good within them, and was marred in each case by the evil.

> The evil in such natures is all the more appalling as part of a peasonality altogether larger than ours, and as far beyond our judgment in its darkness as beyond our following in its light.

And it is sufficient warning to the young, the artistic, and the imaginative in our midst, who think that they may permit themselves in the sins and weaknesses sometimes allied to genius, or who think they may revel in the impure in the name of art without moral deterioration,—it is surely sufficient warning against so mean a folly to discern, as they may with little pains, that of all human existences, the lives of these men were probably the most miserable.

All is moral—from the angels before the throne to the hyssop on the wall; from the mother bending over her babe to the artist bending over his easel; from the work of the statesman to the song of the musician; from household duties to artistic joys—all is moral. Truth, Sincerity and Nobleness are the golden chains that bind all things about the feet of God. There is an Everlasting Right which makes all life, with all its activities, sacred and fair, whether in business, in pleasure, or in art. We cannot divide life into water-tight compartments, where the things that rule in one are shut out from the other. One principle, one ideal, one spirit runs through all. It may be thought by some in their craving for joy and pleasure and artistic sensations, that Right is stern, and a check upon joy and beauty. So it sometimes is of joy and beauty that live and move and have their being in an atmosphere of morbid passion and hectic emotion. But also we may say of the everlasting Right,

> Thou dost crown
> The Godhead's most benignant grace:
> Nor know we anything so fair
> As is the smile upon thy face:
> Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
> And fragrance in thy footing treads:
> Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
> And the most ancient heavens, through thee, are fresh and strong.

There is one thing everybody gives most generously—advice!

No man in the world less knows a fool than himself; nay, he is more than ignorant, for he constantly errs in the point, taking himself for, and demeaning himself as towards another, a better, a wiser and abler man than he is.

Manchester College (Oxford) Letter.

MARCH.

Before this letter appears in print we shall have *gone down* for the Easter vacation. The term opened ill. A slight epidemic of small-pox had broken out in the town, and for a fortnight there was a possibility of our being *rusticated*. However, the authorities set to and stifled the fiend. The spirit of many a sturdy "athletic individual" was tamed by the surgeon's lancet.

With this exception things have gone smoothly. We have had, on the whole, delightful weather. The Torpids were particularly favoured. They were seen to their best advantage. The river was gay with thirty crews. The banks were crowded. Fair ones filled the barges and boat-houses. What agonising struggles! What roars from robust chests! Bumps were numerous. What rattling then of rattles and firing of pistols! No one can witness these most severe contests, fought out in the truest spirit of emulation, without feeling what a grand physical life and lofty sense of honour are there stored up for the future. Here characters are formed and men are made. Here comradeship is known. Compared with these and similar influences, one feels that, after all, the Lecture-Room and Study are secondary. Far greater than direct academic education is the indirect, imperceptibly acting upon us, and this comes more into play on the river and in the cricket and football field, and in vital contact man with man.

There was another tourney of giants this term of peculiar interest—this, however, on the mental field. Mr. Asquith came down to take part in a debate at the Union on the Education Question. The whole 'Varsity seemed to be there; the house and gallery were packed. Even the dons left their parchments for once. An excellent debate followed. Mr. Asquith was much appreciated. The *Bull Dog*, the latest specimen of Oxford student journalism, gives us an account of him as an undergraduate. "At twenty-one Mr. Asquith was regarded by his friends in the way that all the world judges him to-day. He subscribed to none of the fads and fashions which are incessantly appearing in Oxford. A practical man all over, in spite of his great talents, he was never remarkable for originality, much less for eccentricity. In conversation he was brilliant, but it was the brilliance rather of intellect than imagination. It would not be true to call him a destructive critic, but he was very hard to convince. As one of his contemporaries admirably puts it, 'His common-sense amounted to genius.'"

As thus characterised in youth, so he appeared to us on this memorable evening. The motion—which was against any increased support of the Voluntary Schools—was lost, but only by a very narrow majority.

Our Chapel has been further beautified by the completion of three more windows, representing the "Six Days of Creation," executed by William Morris, from designs by Burne Jones. They are the gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Arlosh, in memory of their only son. The Chapel is now gradually getting that which alone it needs to complete its beauty—the glory of colour. Time was when, in the opinion of most people, it had too much of the "garish day," but now the light from west and north streams in softened rays through "painted windows richly dight." The great west window was placed last summer, and has already been mentioned in an "Oxford Letter." During the Christmas vacation the "Creation" windows have been put on the north side. Superb in colouring, they greatly enrich the Chapel, and tell the old Creation story with all its interest and poetry. It will be remembered that it was particularly in regard to the subject of these windows that an animated correspondence appeared in the *Inquirer*. I think there is none among us who feels that this subject is in any way alien to his spirit, and our evolution theories are not likely to be upset. I have no space for a detailed account. Suffice it to say that connoisseurs regard them as a great success.

We have begun missionizing in Oxford. A Sunday School has been started. It is not yet christened, but I believe it is to be called the "Children's Mission." We began this term with ten, and we now have about thirty pupils. We start with many difficulties. Oxford is well worked by the orthodox bodies. The children we get are generally such as the other schools are not anxious to retain. We think, however, they have come to stay. The last Sunday or two I have been using with my class R. L. Stevenson's "Child's Garden of Verse"—a true children's book. The spirit of childhood breathes throughout it—in its naivete, its vivid imagination, its exaggerations, and strange associations. Some of the verses are of a refined nursery-rhyme order—for children, not infants. Others, even teachers, might read with advantage. I know of no better book for conveying one into the child's atmosphere of joy and dreams. Of course, there is nothing theological in it; but there is airiness and fancy. For making the little ones merry, what can be happier than this couplet?—

> "The world is so full of a number of things,
> I am sure we should all be as happy as kings."

We have been reading Mr. Balfour's "Foundations of Belief" at Professor Carpenter's "at homes." Papers have been delivered by Mr. Anderton, Mr. Whitaker, and Mr. Hall. The Rev. P. Wicksteed also gave us an address on "Certain Implications of Socialism." A conversation afterwards ensued between Mr. Wicksteed and Mr. Graham Wallas, which we all appreciated.

The course of lectures by Mr. George St. Clair on the "Geography of Palestine" were well attended. Professor Odgers has also given us a course of three lectures on "Early Christian Archæology," illustrated by very beautiful magic-lantern slides. The lectures were specially intended for members of the University contemplating a visit to Rome. We had a goodly number of visitors.

At our debates, Mr. Anderton moved for Secular Education and Universal Board Schools, and Mr. Hall for the encouragement by our churches of the P.S.A. movement.

Our special preachers this term were the Rev. George St. Clair and the Rev. P. Wicksteed.

What a glamour is love! It even made our parents think that we, when children, were angelically beautiful. The fact is we were as ugly as rain-clouds, but their love clothed us in rainbows!

The Annual Meetings of the Midland Christian Union.

Monday, March 16th, was a memorable day in the history of the Union. We do not remember a series of annual meetings more encouraging to those who have the interest of this association at heart. They seemed to us to give evidence of growing life within our local churches, and growing interest in our work on the part of the world outside. The tone of the speakers was hopeful, energetic, and earnest, and the close attention with which they were followed by the audience was most manifest.

At the business meeting an important change in the *personnel* of the Committee was announced. Mr. A. W. Worthington, who has long served the Union as treasurer, and earned the deep gratitude of the members in his office, retires, and Mr. Archibald Kenrick takes his place. One honoured name is thus exchanged for another. We wish Mr. Kenrick good success and a plentitude of favourable balances. The marked increase in the Birmingham collections on Sunday last, and the large collection on Monday night, should help him to commence his duties with a light heart.

The proceedings at the afternoon meeting were kept at a remarkably high level, and this was welcome to the hearers. The presidential address was such as we might expect from our President. It was the word of one who is eager to lead our churches into realms of larger, fuller life, and who, at the same time, is able to give the lead which he desires others to follow. In his plea for greater cohesion, the President touched the deepest of our needs. Mr. Wood evidently feels very keenly the isolation in which we have been placed by the action of the Free Church Congress. But since the isolation is their doing, and not ours and since we are powerless to alter it, it is for us to make the best of the situation. By isolating us, the Congress has called the attention of the public to that which is distinct in our position, and so helped us indirectly to a more effective proclamation of that freedom of the spirit in which we believe, and which seems to us vastly more precious than even freedom from State control. But is there not one step which we have still to take in this matter? Accepting our exclusion as final, if indeed it be such, and abstaining from any effort to press for admission where we are not wanted, ought not our churches to enter a united and dignified protest against the grounds on which they have been excluded?

Dr. Drummond's address was a masterly theological exposition. In language of perfect lucidity and grace, he dealt with high and difficult themes in a manner to be understood by the least technical minds. Our churches need from time to time to take their theological bearings, and we are grateful to Dr. Drummond for enabling us to do this so clearly and well. He dwelt on the remarkable approximation to our theological way of thought which has now taken place in orthodox quarters. As Dr. Drummond was speaking, the thought may have occurred to many that if this approximation is a fact to us, it is equally a fact to them; but how little readiness they show to recognise it! Imagine the Principal of Mansfield College giving a public address on "The Approximation of Theology to the Unitarian Position." It would seem, judging from the action of the Free Church Congress, that the nearer our thought and theirs converge, the less ready are they to recognise us as brethren. Query: May not the nearness of our position to theirs be the very reason why they are so reluctant to approach any nearer?

Mr. Gow's address sustained the high level at which Dr. Drummond had started the discussion. It was a singularly able and penetrating utterance. His account of the theology of Ritschl was of the highest interest. In Germany, Ritschl's views are now dominant, but as yet little is known of them in this country. Patriots will no doubt be glad to learn that there is still some theology in England which does not bear the well-known stamp "made in Germany." But, judging from the analogies of the past, we may expect to see before long some large importations of Ritschlianism over here. Not even the indignation caused by the Kaiser's message to President Kruger will long delay the inveterate tendency of English theologians to buy their wares in the German

market. By that time the views in question will probably have become obsolete over there. The Germans tell us that Englishmen never buy their theological goods until they have become second-hand, and a drug on the home market.

It was a great preacher who spoke from the pulpit of the Church of the Messiah in the evening. Neither the occasion nor the matter is likely to be forgotten. The plea for worship as the chief end for which churches exist was nobly conceived, and dealt directly with one of the most serious aberrations of Nonconformity in the present day. The tone of the sermon was of the highest and most impressive. It was the utterance of one whose catholicity of spirit is matched by his intellectual and moral power. It was marked by great affluence of expression and forcible earnestness of delivery. Dr. Hunter's manner of preaching may be compared to a wide-spreading landscape, brilliantly lighted in all its parts, and teeming everywhere with luxuriant vegetation. He allows his hearers no interludes for pleasant loitering in shady coverts, but takes them rapidly from one hill top to another, with great panoramas of thought always full in view. He was heard on this occasion by a crowded congregation, united, we venture to say, not only in their appreciation of his words, but in warmest welcome to his presence.

Ministerial Failure *versus* Success.

(FROM A PLAIN POINT OF VIEW.)

DEBIT.

'Tis accusation true—that in my say—
When calling to the people "walk this way"
My dullard tones good dint did much delay.
Therein I failed.

And scarcely false is it that when some act
Of due decorum seemed the thing they lacked,
I was too blunt—proceeding without tact.
Therein I failed.

I grant you, too—some themes whereon I wrote
Might just as well have stuck within my throat:
The dear assembly did not care a groat.
Therein I failed.

And I admit quite common sins were mine—
That many a time, attempting brave to shine
By flights of fancy, I did sprawl supine.
Therein I failed.

Again, I need not think your charge to scout:
Sparse visitor! I did not gad about;
I knew my people—for *I found them out.*
Therein I failed.

And you allege that I too often stayed
With Mrs. Grundy's troop of man and maid,
And wearied welcome—that I won't evade.
Therein I failed.

CREDIT.

In turn you'll please to hear th' explicit truth
Of how things went.—Devoid of selfish ruth,
I did not fawn, I did not flinch, good sooth.
A friend was I.

It might have been some liked and some were loath,
Some laughed, and some did listen—unto both
The Word of God was said; and *minus* oath—
A friend was I.

'Twas mine to christen babes, entomb the dead;
'Twas mine to kneel beside the sufferer's bed;
'Twas mine to cheer the lone and bless the wed
A friend was I.

They've had me in their houses—in my heart
I've had them all. A pastor plays his part;
And if it merit be for sin to smart—
A friend was I.

I did not preach myself—I voiced Him
Whose "Come" sounds yet. And of the glad-some hymn
And Holy Writ I left no impress dim.
A friend was I.

Further I may not tell. I stand one more—
Feeble, perchance—of those who witness o'er
What God hath done. His love what folk adore.
A friend am I.

Con amore.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

The Happy Heart.

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content!
Art thou rich, yet is thy mind perplexéd?
O punishment!
Dost thou laugh to see how fools are vexéd
To add to golden numbers, golden numbers?
O sweet content! O sweet O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny!

Canst drink the waters of the crispéd spring?
O sweet content!
Swimm'st thou in wealth, yet sink'st in thine own tears?
O punishment!
Then he that patiently want's burden bears
No burden bears, but is a king, a king!
O sweet content! O sweet O sweet content!
Work apace, apace, apace, apace;
Honest labour bears a lovely face;
Then hey nonny nonny, hey nonny nonny!

DEKKER

Our Baby.

"Zis instant—minute."

Wate (wake) up, zis instant—minute.

These were the first words that Sarah, the new nursery-maid, heard on the morning after she had gone to her place at the Hall. She had stolen into bed very quietly the night before, for nurse had said the least noise would wake the little three-year old girl who was to be her special charge; but she had just taken one peep into the crib where the child slept, and secretly rejoiced over the loveliness she saw there—such long lashes lying on the fair flushed cheek, such soft yellow hair, such a round red mouth; Sarah felt quite sure that when those eyes opened she would find them very blue; but now, this morning, she saw she had been quite mistaken, for there was Baby wide awake, sitting bolt upright in her crib, and the roguish eyes peeping at her over the top rail were very dark indeed.

"Is you awake?" asked Baby.

"Yes, Miss," answered Sarah.

"Musn't say miss," said Baby, gravely shaking her head.

"What must I say, then?" asked Sarah.

"I's Baby," was the answer.

"How are you this morning, Baby?" asked Sarah.

"Must'nt say Baby," reproved the child; "say *Miss* Baby."

"Do you know I have come to live with you, Miss Baby?"

"Zen zoo mustn't call me *Miss* Baby; I'se Puff Ball now."

Baby looked so charming, she had risen to her feet and was leaning over the crib, shaking her head in a threatening way at the new nursemaid till all the light hair stood in a bright fluff round her face. All that Sarah could say was, "You darling little Puff Ball!"

"*Miss* Puff Ball," corrected Baby; "who is zoo?"

"I am Sarah, Miss Puff Ball."

"Sazah is a naughty ugly word," said Baby; "I'se won't say Sazah."

"What will you call me then, Miss?"

Baby was puzzled, and looked anxious; presently her face brightened, and she said, "Zoo is not Sazah, zoo is Simpson."

She was very much pleased with herself, she clasped her fat hands over her head and laughed delightedly.

"Simpson, Simpson, Simpson," she repeated again and again; "Simpson is boopilar."

Baby's language certainly needed explanation, if not translation; Sarah found out afterwards that "boopilar" meant "beautiful," and it was a word happy "Puff Ball" was always using; looking up into the windy sky and watching the swift clouds, she would whisper it, and holding a flower in her chubby hands, she would again say it with almost breathless admiration; but she would become almost sad when she saw that her ardent kisses had made the flower look shabby.

She was very affectionate. Once she picked up and kissed a half-dead bee. The ungrateful creature, unaccustomed to that sort of thing, repaid the soft lips with a sting, but I am glad to say, it was a very slight one.

Sarah grew very fond of "Miss Puff Ball," indeed she found her so attractive that she did not get through her work very quickly, and this did not quite please nurse; but it was difficult not to stand still and watch Baby when she did such very amusing things. For instance, once Sarah saw her put a chair close to the fireside, climb upon it, take a letter from the mantel-shelf, remove the envelope, pretend to read it carefully, and then, when it was finished, replace it in the envelope, saying, with a sad shake of the head, "More bad noos."

"What bad news, Miss?" asked Sarah.

Baby started, she had been talking to herself, but she promptly answered, "Ze cimley (the chimney) is 'moking, and 'moking, and 'moking, and all ze little dogs is dead."

This was just like Baby, she would not allow herself to be taken by surprise, she always pretended to know everything. That very evening when her father came into the nursery, he peeped into the breast pocket of his coat saying, "Poor puss, poor puss."

"Is it a pooftie?" (pussy) said Baby excitedly.

"Come and see!" said Mr. Fendal.

She jumped on a chair and pulled his coat open; there was no cat there, but Baby pretended there was, pretended to stroke it, and then that it had run away; she chased it round the room, searched for it under the table, and at last got Sarah to open the door, after which she returned to her father and said sadly, "Ye boopilar pooftie is yun away."

No wonder nurse called the little lady a "play actor."

An April Sermon.

Fair Nelly is a butterfly
Who loves the brightest flow'rs,
But she will pout and fret and sigh
E'en during passing show'rs;
When sunbeams gild each golden curl
She'll carol light and gay,
But, oh! I fear she's not the girl
For any rainy day!

There's dimpled Dora, sweetest pet,
And fairest of the fair;
She'll trifle with a coronet
Or jilt a millionaire:
A blue-eyed, bonny, cool coquette,
Brave hearts she will betray;
Their owners she will quite forget,
On any rainy day!

Sweet Geraldine, on summer days,
Is just the girl for me;
Her smiles are then beyond all praise,
Her heart is full of glee:
But had she not her Arab steed,
Her Ladies' Mile in May,
I fear she would look glum indeed
On any rainy day!

I fancy Alice might be true,
She's such a little dear,
If I had an estate or two,
And thousands ten a year!
A Dresden china little dear,
But not the sort of clay
To form the idol I'd revere
On any rainy day.

Majestic Maud would fix her throne
In lordly hall or park;
She could not love—for love alone,
A Foreign Office clerk;
A little house in Camden Town,
Her lover's little pay,
I fear would make my lady frown
On any rainy day!

Proud Ethel is the sort of queen
At Opera to reign,
To show her brilliant flashing sheen
And rich brocaded train:
She ne'er could wear a muslin dress
Nor "cab it" to the play;
She's not the girl, I must confess,
For any rainy day.

I know a pet of eighteen years,
Who, true in joy and pain,
Will sweetly smile through falling tears,
Like April sun through rain:
Whose bright brown eyes most brightly shine,
When skies are coldest gray.
I'd like to call that beauty mine
On any rainy day!

I would that she were close to me,
I'd read her eyes, and then
P'r'aps to this simple homily
She'd sigh a sweet "Amen:"
How sunny life's sad monotone,
Illumined by this ray!
With such a darling for my own
On any rainy day!

News from the Field.

BIRMINGHAM POSTAL MISSION.—The third annual meeting of the above mission was held in the committee room, 65, Hagley Road, on Thursday, March 19th, the President (Miss Gittins) in the chair. About 30 people were present, amongst whom were Mrs. R. L. Chance, Mrs. Erhardt, Mrs. Charles Harding, Rev. John Harrison, Rev. L. P. Jacks, Lady Martineau, Miss Jane Martineau, Mrs. Nettlefold, Miss Ryland, Mrs. Brooke Smith, Miss Caroline Smith, Mr. W. J. B. Tranter. Letters of apology were received from Mr. F. S. Bolton, Rev. W. J. Clarke, Mrs. Crosskey, Mrs. Covington, Mrs. Forrester, Mrs. W. Kenrick, Rev. E. Myers, Mrs Nightingale, Mrs. R. Peyton, Mrs. T. H. Russell, and Rev. J. Wood.—The Secretary read the report, which showed that the Committee had received 625 letters and 15 calls; had written 805 letters; distributed 1644 pamphlets, and lent 129 books from library—an increase in most cases of more than double the previous year. The Committee have received many gifts of books for the library, which they much appreciate.—The President moved the adoption of the report, and gave an account of some of the mission work. She said how much indebted the Committee were to the B. and F. U. Association, and to the ministers who have written the tracts so much used. Amongst the most helpful of the books and pamphlets in the library, and most largely used, were Rev. J. Wood's, "The Bible, What It Is, and Is Not," Rev. R. A. Armstrong's pamphlet, "Principles and Ideals of the Unitarians," and Rev. C. Perry's "Unitarianism, an Affirmative Faith." These the Committee found were always appreciated.—The resolution was seconded by Mr. W. J. Tranter.—A resolution, thanking the late officers and committee for their past services and re-appointing them for the ensuing year, was proposed by the Rev. L. P. Jacks, who said that he moved the resolution most heartily, and in no complimentary spirit, knowing as he did the difficulties of Postal Mission work. He expressed his appreciation of the manner in which these difficulties had been met, and of the thorough way in which the work was carried on.—The Rev. John Harrison, Missionary Agent to the Midland Christian Union, in seconding this resolution, endorsed what had been said by Mr. Jacks, and expressed his willingness to assist the work of the Birmingham Postal Mission by any means in his power.—On the motion of Miss L. L. Dowson, seconded by Mrs. Charles Harding, the thanks of the meeting were given to Miss Gittins for presiding.—On Miss Gittins acknowledging this resolution, the meeting terminated with tea.

MIDLAND CHRISTIAN UNION. — The Midland Christian Union and Provincial Assembly held its annual meetings on Monday, March 16th, in the Church of the Messiah, Broad Street, Birmingham; the Rev. Joseph

Wood presiding.—The Rev. A. A Charlesworth (hon. secretary), read the report of the committee, which stated that at the commencement of the year the pulpits at Small Heath and Wolverhampton were vacant. It was decided not to nominate ministers at once, but to appoint a missionary agent for the Midlands, who should begin his work with these two congregations as a basis. The step was taken as much in the interests of these churches as for the benefit of the cause of Liberal Christianity in the Midlands generally. It was hoped that in a short period both churches would be in a position to invite a minister of their own, leaving the agent at liberty to break new ground. With the consent of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, the Rev. John Harrison, of West Bromwich, had been appointed agent. Happily the step had already justified itself. The condition of the congregation at Wolverhampton had distinctly improved, and at Small Heath the improvement was more marked still. In regard to the Church of the Saviour, the committee, when apprised of the intention of the trustees to sell the building, sent in an application to be made residuary legatees in the interest of the Small Heath congregation. The negotiations had terminated favourably, and a substantial sum had been secured towards the building of a church. Only one condition had been stipulated—namely, that the church should be based on the same broad principles as those of the Church of the Saviour. The resignation of the Rev. John Dale rendered the pulpit at Alcester vacant. Unfortunately the larger financial help asked for by the Union at the last annual meeting had not met with any result. The subscriptions were £9 less, and the year closed with a deficit of nearly £20, a deficit which would have been very much larger but for the generous donation of £50 from Mr. A. W. Worthington. An increase of subscriptions to the extent of about £75 was needed to put matters in a thoroughly sound position, and the committee urged the congregations to organise a systematic canvass, with a view to obtaining new subscribers. —The Rev. J. Harrison, in the course of an address on the work of the missionary agent, said that he had secured the services of fourteen laymen for Wolverhampton and Small Heath, and hoped in course of time to form a lay preachers' association.—The financial statement, read by the hon. treasurer (Mr. A. W. Worthington) showed a deficit of £20.—The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the reports, said that he had great pleasure in stating that the collections on Sunday at several churches had shown a marked increase.—The Rev. L. P. Jacks, who seconded the motion, said that he had observed with astonishment the extraordinary outburst of sacerdotalism in the Church of England, and the claim put forward on the part of the Anglican clergy to dominate the consciences of laymen. What was still more extraordinary than the claims put forward was the readiness of the people to admit these claims. Considering the aggressiveness of sacerdotalism and the readiness of the public to yield, the duty of Free Christians to explain their principles became all the more imperative. The work of the Puritan Reformation had almost to be done over again, and, as the inheritors of Puritan tradition, the responsibility was theirs—(Hear, hear).—The resolution having been carried, the Rev. Joseph Wood was re-elected president of the union, and the Rev. A. A. Charlesworth hon. secretary. Mr. A. Kenrick was appointed treasurer, Mr. Worthington being no longer able to spare the time for the work. Hearty votes of thanks were passed to the officers, and especially to Mr. Worthington for his services as treasurer during the past twelve years.—On the motion of Mr. Herbert New, seconded by Mr. Priestley Evans, a resolution was passed declaring that the time had come for commencing to build at Small Heath.—The Rev. J. C. Street proposed: "That this meeting declares that no measure dealing with the subject of national education will be satisfactory which does not secure (1) that increased grants of public money to voluntary schools shall be accompanied by local representative control; (2) that any additional grant of public money shall go to increase the efficiency of the schools; and (3) that nothing shall be done to impair the efficiency of the Board schools, or to weaken in any way the existing guarantees of their unsectarian character. The meeting is further of opinion that the demand of the teachers in voluntary schools for relief from compulsory extraneous duties, and for reasonable security of tenure, should be granted."—Mr. G Titterton, in seconding the motion, said that if the Government acceded to the demands of the denominational party they would put an "intolerable strain" upon the continuity of support which some of them had given to the Government during the last ten years.—The resolution was carried with two dissentients.—Lunch was provided for the delegates at the Grand Hotel by the Church of the Messiah.—At the afternoon meeting the President (the Rev. J. Wood) delivered an address. Having congratulated the members on the success of a year's faithful work, done often in obscure places and under the most depressing conditions, he doubted if the difficulties of their position were ever greater than they were to-day. The open persecution of the old days inspired the zeal of their churches, and welded them into a compact body. To-day they had to face a sad revival of narrowness and bitterness. While the forces of science and literature, the Darwins and Spencers, the Tennysons and the Brownings were with them in the battle for faith, and freedom, righteousness and purity, the great Churches were farther off from them than ever. The nearer these Churches were to them on some points, the more emphatic was their protest of difference as to other points. Thus they were denied, as individuals, the Christian name, and in their collective capacity were not acknowledged as a Christian Church. The Free Church Congress, for instance, had written over its doors, in large letters, "No Unitarian admitted to Heaven by the gate of Evangelical Nonconformity." Unitarians might climb over the wall, or go round to the back, and perhaps they might find some servants' entrance by which they might creep in. The attitude of Mr. H. P. Hughes and his friends was a suggestive commentary on their desire for Christian unity. They were willing to work with Unitarians on social questions, on temperance questions, in resisting the attempt to sectarianise elementary education, in the promotion of arbitration and of civil and religious liberty, in resisting sacerdotal pretensions, but would not kneel with them

in prayer, or praise God in their company. "No doubt," these people said, "you are very good, kindly, upright folk—rather given to paying twenty shillings in the pound—(laughter)—but you don't think with us on certain mysterious doctrines, and we cut you off from the fellowship of the Church on earth." Who were they who judged their neighbours? Who gave them power to excommunicate?—(applause). Mr. Hughes poured contempt on what he called the catholicity of the Pope and the catholicity of the Crown—though both the Roman and the Anglican communities would probably indignantly repudiate Mr. Hughes's account of them—and then claimed that the only people in the world who had the true ideal of catholicity were the Evangelical Nonconformists—"catholicity in Christ" Mr. Hughes called it. But it must be Mr. Hughes's Christ, not the Christ of the New Testament. Mr. Hughes's Christ was a theological dogma. But Jesus said "by their fruits ye shall know them," and churches which produced such saintly souls as H. W. Crosskey, Timothy Kenrick, Susan Martineau, and W Sextus Harding, might claim to be of the household of faith and in the true apostolical succession. Unitarianism possessed all the elements of a living Church, but unfortunately these elements lacked fusion. It was not Church life to meet together to listen to an eloquent sermon. Their fellowship with one another ought to be more vital and manifest than it was. He had heard people say "I don't want to know the people who worship with me any more than I want to know the people who sit with me at a concert." Those who said that had to learn the very A B C of Church life—(Applause). They ought to want to know those who were one with them in the deepest sympathies and the highest hopes. Spiritual life was no mere individual matter, but a movement of many souls in sympathy and work, and of this sense of corporate life there was urgent need among them.—The Rev Dr. Drummond, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, gave an address on "Some Present Aspects of Christian Doctrine." The Rev. H. Gow (Leicester) also spoke on the same subject, and a discussion followed.—In the evening a special sermon was preached in the Church of the Messiah, by the Rev. Dr. John Hunter, of Glasgow. The choirs of the Church of the Messiah and the Old Meeting Church took part in the service, and a collection was made in aid of the funds of the Union.

KIDDERMINSTER.—The *Shuttle* has published a full report of a recent sermon by the Rev. E. D. Priestley Evans on "Who is Jesus?" in which he carefully analyses the scripture evidence on the subject, and sets forth some of the parallel cases of deification. In conclusion, Mr. Evans says: So long as the followers of Jesus believed that he was a man, they loved him, and followed his example in doing deeds of love and mercy. But when he became a God, all minds forgot their love and turned to the task of framing correct theories about his nature; and woe to anyone who thought differently from the opinion of the majority. Thus the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus changed Christianity from love into belief, from conduct to speculation, from life to theology, with the inevitable result of strife, divisions, debates, sects, hatreds, persecutions, bloodshed. Jesus the God had always been a usurper of his Father's throne, and a sower of the seed of contention and strife among men. But Jesus the man—to whom and to whose message they should try to be true—had always been an influence in the world for love and peace. Let them take up the cry of to-day; "Back to Jesus." Back to Jesus, the prophet of Galilee, whom the Apostles knew and believed in; back from fiction to truth, from myth and legend to reality, from creed to deed, from speculation to life, from division and strife to unity and peace. And such a going back would prove a grand going forward—forward to the realisation of the Kingdom of God, the Christ's special work here, and God's will, as well, upon earth.

LYE.—Sunday evening lectures of a doctrinal character have been delivered during the month of February and the early part of March by the resident and neighbouring ministers. The chief feature of the month in connection with the Mutual Improvement Class has been the reading of a paper, by Mr. J. Elcock, on "Capital Punishment." At the close of the discussion a vote was taken, when it was found that five were in favour of Capital Punishment and eight against. An entertainment was held in the Temperance Hall on Monday, March 16th. The entertainment was a very good one, but the attendance was only moderate, this being no doubt owing to rival attractions elsewhere. The chapel anniversary has been fixed for April 19th, the date at which it is usually held not being found convenient. It has been arranged that the present vestry shall be taken down and a larger room built, which will serve the purpose of a vestry, committee room, and classroom. A few more pounds are still needed in order to insure our opening the new room free of debt. Subscriptions towards this object would be thankfully received and acknowledged by the minister, Rev. I. Wrigley. The architect is Mr. J. A. Grew, of Birmingham; the builder, Mr. C. Griffiths, of Lye.

TAMWORTH.—On Sunday, March 8th, a short course of lectures was begun in relation to our Forward Movement, when our minister gave the first on "The Story of the English Reformation and its effects on the religious life of the nation." On the following Wednesday the Rev. W. E. Addis, M.A., conducted a service and gave an earnest and eloquent address on "Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life," which was much appreciated. The collection, with a cheque from a Churchman who was present, did more than meet all expenses. We shall endeavour to have other lectures in the autumn.

WHITCHURCH.—The annual report of the Church of the Saviour records that the services held in 1895 were 148. The weekly collections for church expenses amounted to £69 as against £57 in the previous year. Subscriptons and collections for special objects make a total of £87 raised locally. On the motion of Mr. T. Vaughan, seconded by Mr. H. Williams, the officers for 1896 are Messrs. G. Dodd and Albert Stevens, churchwardens; Mr. John Grestey, treasurer; Mr. J. Beecham, secretary; and Messrs. S. Batho, W. Buttle, G. Groom, J. Stockton, A. Taylor, and C. Taylor, councilmen. Delegates to the M. C. U. and Provincial Assembly were appointed, a hearty vote of thanks to Miss Gresty for her voluntary labours as organist was carried, and after a short address from the minister on the bright outlook, the meeting closed with hymn and prayer.